



**Plan of Action for Regional Transit**  
Northeastern Illinois

March 15, 2023



Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning

# Welcome and Roll Call

## Approval of Minutes



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# CMAP Outreach and Engagement (as of 3.1. 2023)

CMAP Board & Board Advisors

RTA Board

Pace Board

Metra Senior Leadership Council

RTA meetings weekly

CTA, Metra & Pace leadership monthly

CTA, Metra & Pace staff (every three weeks)

County Engineers

County Administrators

County Board Chairs (late March)

Council of Mayors

CMAP Transportation Committee, Climate Committee, Regional Economy Committee

Eno Interviews: *CMAP Board rep, RTA leadership & Board President, all Service Board Executives, MPO leadership, Civic, business, advocacy and labor representatives*



# Principles to guide recommendations



Focus on  
ensuring the  
system is  
financially  
viable in 2026  
and beyond



Identify  
recommendations  
where the state  
has a role in  
implementing  
solutions



Rebuild a  
system that  
is stronger  
than before  
COVID-19



Center the  
users of the  
system



**Be bold**

# Criteria to assess tradeoffs

## Policy considerations (is this an idea worth supporting?)

Mobility

Economic growth

Financial sustainability

Environmental sustainability

Equity

Regional benefit



## Process considerations (what can we accomplish?)

Administrative feasibility

Political feasibility

Timing

State span of control

## [Recommendation title]

- Description of recommendation

## Primary rationale

- Prose discussion of reason for adoption
- Relevant benchmarks if applicable

## Implementation steps

- Legislative actions
- State agency actions
- Local/regional actions necessary to support

## Policy evaluation

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Mobility         | High/Med/Low            |
| Equity           | High/Med/Low            |
| Economy          | High/Med/Low            |
| Environment      | High/Med/Low            |
| Regional benefit | Regional/Suburban/Urban |

## Process evaluation

|                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Admin. feasibility    | High/Med/Low  |
| Political feasibility | High/Med/Low  |
| Timing                | Near/Med/Long |
| State control         | High/Med/Low  |

## Net cost / investment

|      | '25 | '26 | '27 | '28 | '29 | '30 |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Ops. |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Cap. |     |     |     |     |     |     |

## Risks

- Risks to implementation





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# The system we want





# Better buses

## *ON TO 2050:*

Invest in and protect transit's core strengths by implementing bus rapid transit and other investments that improve on-road transit service.

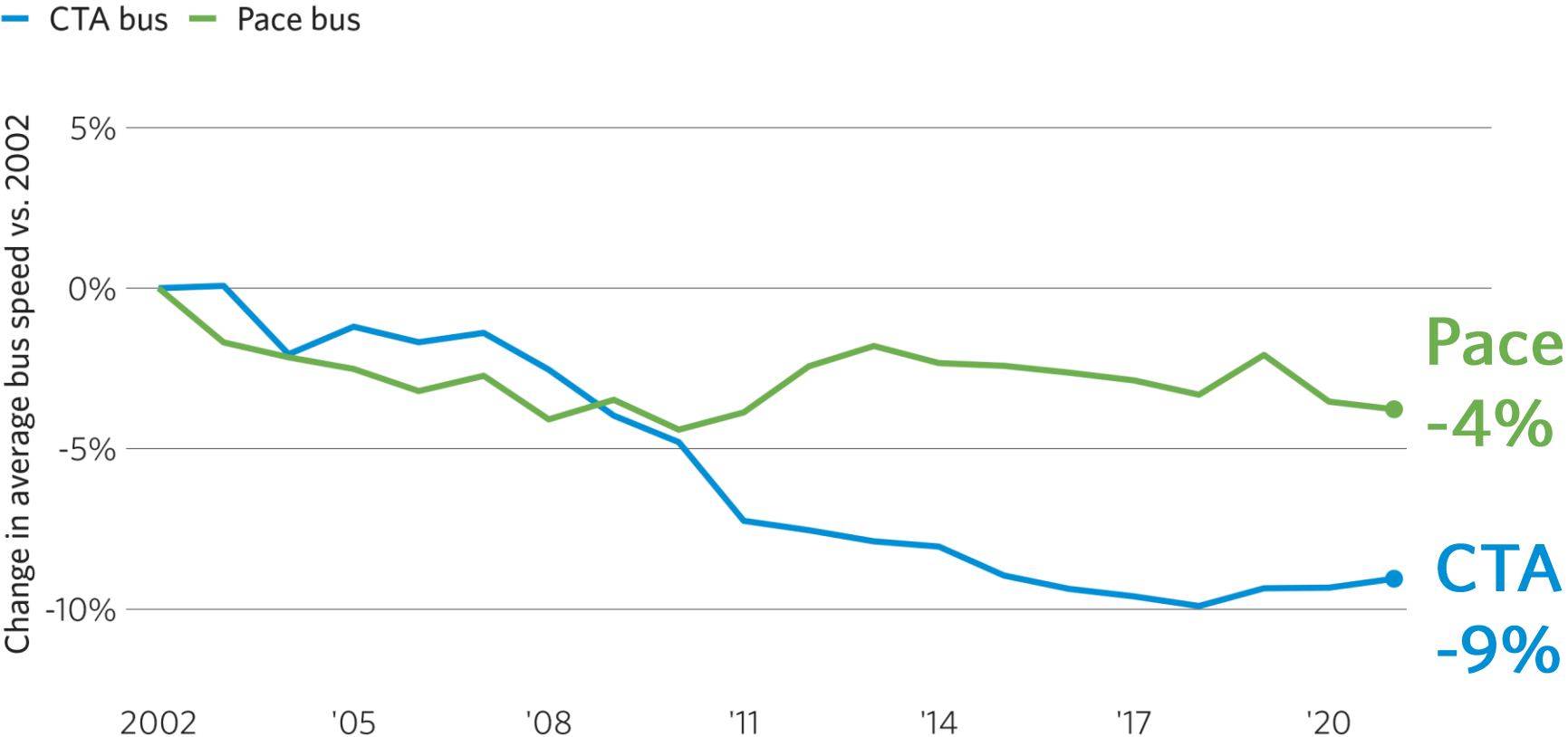
## *Transit is the Answer:*

Partner with roadway agencies to build more transit-friendly streets and advance bus rapid transit.



# Buses are getting slower, especially on CTA

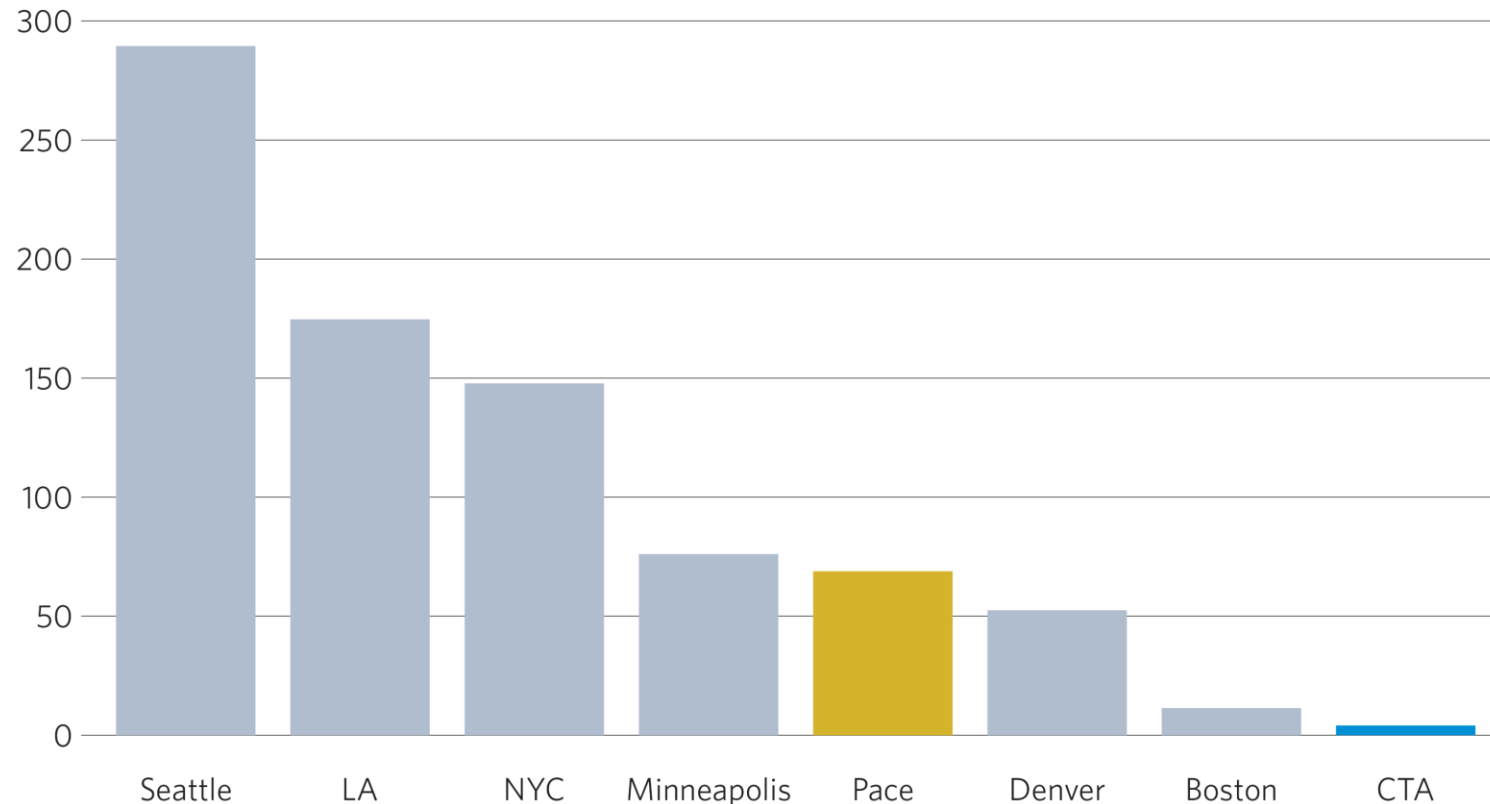
Bus speed in the CMAP region, 2002-2021.



CMAP analysis of National Transit Database data.

# The region has invested in dedicated bus infrastructure, but lags many peers

Miles of dedicated busway for CTA Bus and Pace versus peer regions, 2021



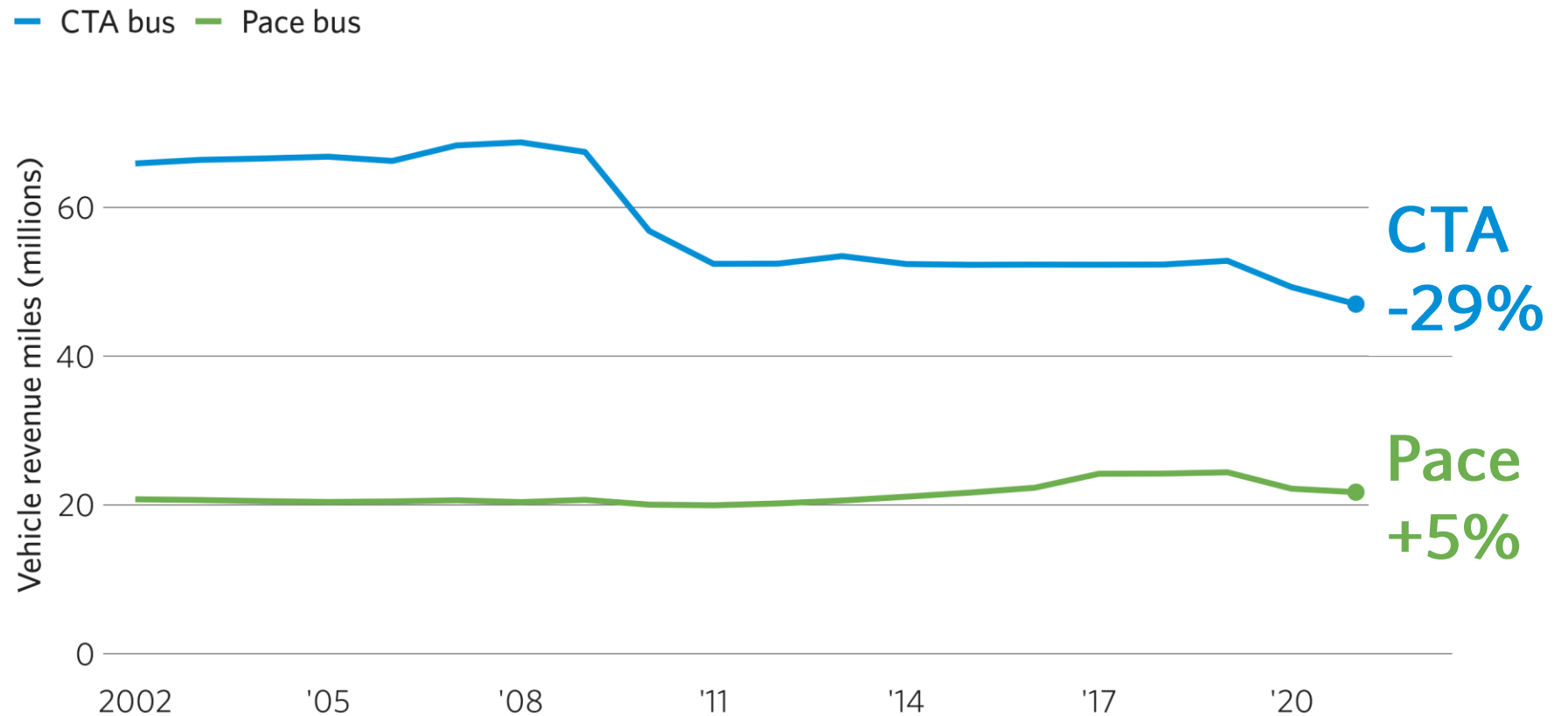
Source: CMAP analysis of National Transit Database. Pace figures include "Bus on Shoulder" program









# And while Pace bus service has grown, CTA bus service has significantly declined

Bus service in the CMAP region, 2002-2021.



CMAP analysis of National Transit Database data.

# We can learn from peer examples

| Agency   | Region                          | Program  |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
|  King County METRO                          | Seattle, Washington             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RapidRide routes</li><li>• Increased frequency</li><li>• Dedicated transitways</li></ul>   |
|  Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority | Boston, Massachusetts           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dedicated bus priority municipal staff</li><li>• Pilot pop-up bus lanes</li><li>• Dedicated bus infrastructure in city, suburbs</li></ul>                          |
|  MTA                                       | New York City, New York         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select Bus Service (dedicated lanes, pre-payment, automated enforcement)</li><li>• NYC DOT played leading role in design, construction, planning</li></ul>         |
|  Metro Transit                            | Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive BRT network</li><li>• Dedicated transit staff at state and local roadway agencies work closely with Metro Transit to plan and deliver projects</li></ul> |

# We will review a menu of options



## Bus priority infrastructure

- State program to require planning and designation of priority bus corridors
- Dedicated state funding for bus priority improvements
- Requirement that street design manuals incorporate bus priority infrastructure; design standards adjusted on designated corridors
- ...and more



## Automated enforcement for bus lanes, stops

- Enable automated enforcement for bus lane and bus stop violations
- Grant authority to service providers (CTA, Pace) to administer enforcement
- ...and more



## Public sector capacity at roadway agencies

- Fund dedicated staff at IDOT regional offices to implement the new program of bus priority infrastructure
- Provide grant funding for local staff capacity
- ...and more



A blue Pace bus is stopped at a transit station. The destination sign above the windshield reads "352 HARVEY TC". The bus has "68 pace" written on the front. Several passengers are waiting on the sidewalk. The background shows a building with solar panels. A blue semi-transparent overlay covers the right side of the image, containing white text.

# Fare integration

*ON TO 2050:*

Provide and improve seamless payment for multiple transit providers and other modes.

*Transit is the Answer:*

Make paying for transit more seamless and more affordable.

# Despite progress, challenges remain for a seamless, multi-modal transit system

## Recent progress



## Challenges





### *To the user*

- Multiple payment methods
- Lack of discounts between some modes
- Same transit trip can have very different costs
- Connections rely on complementary modes (Divvy, South Shore Line) that are not integrated

### *To the system*

- Technology and fare collection methods are not compatible
- Farebox recovery ratio requirement incentivizes competition on overlapping services

# We can learn from peer examples

| Agency/Program   | Region                | Program   |
|--|-----------------------|---|
|   | Seattle, Washington   | 100% free transfers across regional agencies, managed by a joint board. The highest fare among the services used is the only fare you pay.                            |
|  Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority | Boston, Massachusetts | Daily, weekly, and monthly commuter rail passes include local bus and subway (zone-based).  |
|  METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION     | Bay Area, California  | In development; free transfers to be coordinated by MTC between commuter/regional rail and local bus/subway, with discounted transfers between regional rail systems. |
|   | Berlin, Germany       | 100% free transfer between modes within a specific geographic area (zone-based).  |

# We will review a menu of options

**Fare integration is a primary area of focus**

## **Enabling multi-modal journeys on regional transit**

- Enabling free or discounted transfers on single journey and multi-day passes
- Providing a unified payment method (e.g., tap-on with Ventra)
- Setting timelines, metrics, and implementation requirements
- Funding to offset any reduced fare revenue and required capital investments

## **Establishing consistency across fare structures**

- Different fare models that enable greater consistency (e.g., zones, learning from peer examples)
- Structures and decision-making processes to better align fare structures now and in the future
- ...and more

**It will be supported by complementary fare reforms**

**Integration with  
complementary modes**

**Subsidized fares**

**Farebox recovery ratio reforms**



# Discussion

What is your reaction to these challenges and potential solutions?

Where can the state have the greatest impact to support these recommendations?





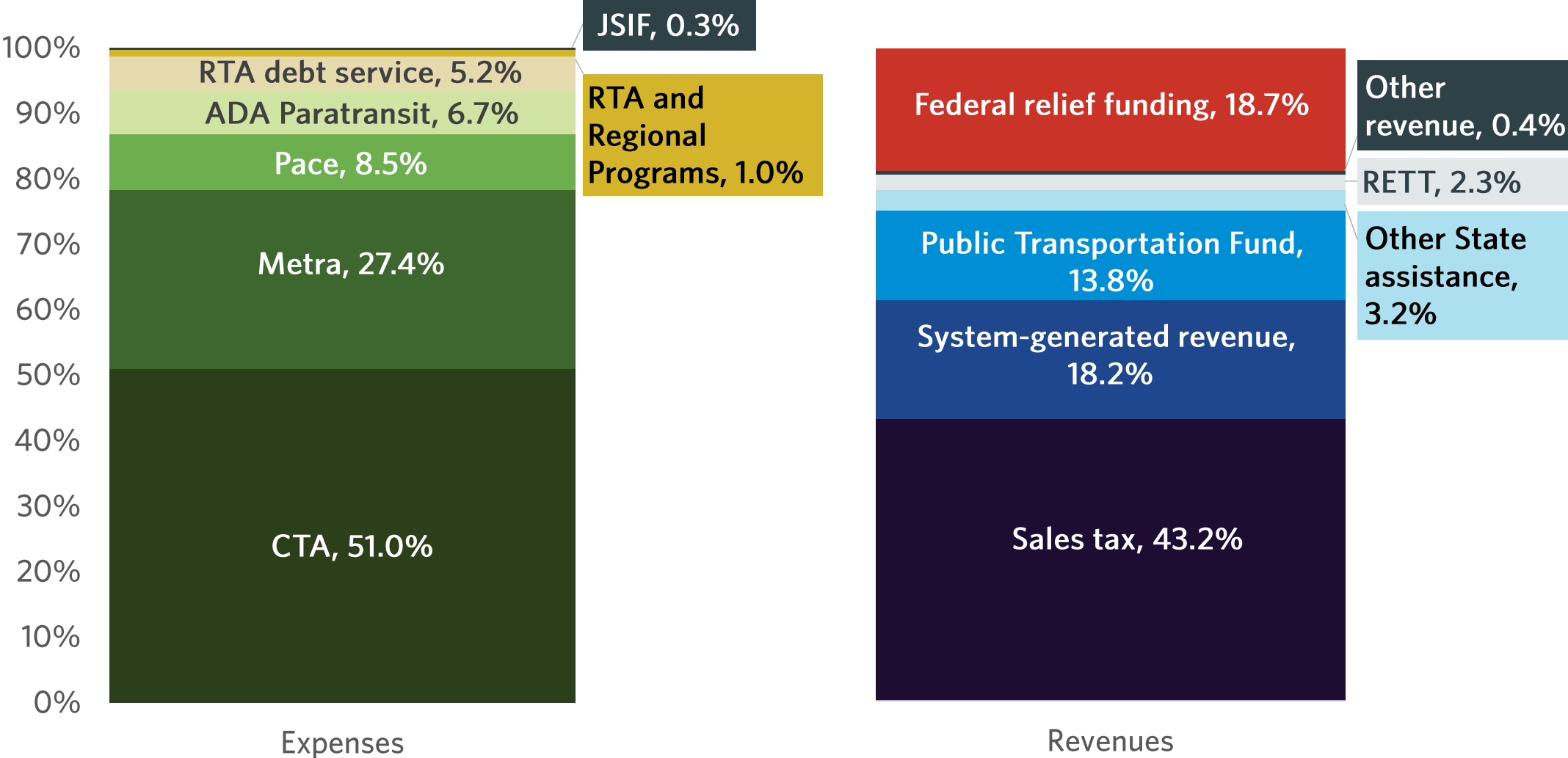
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# How to pay for it





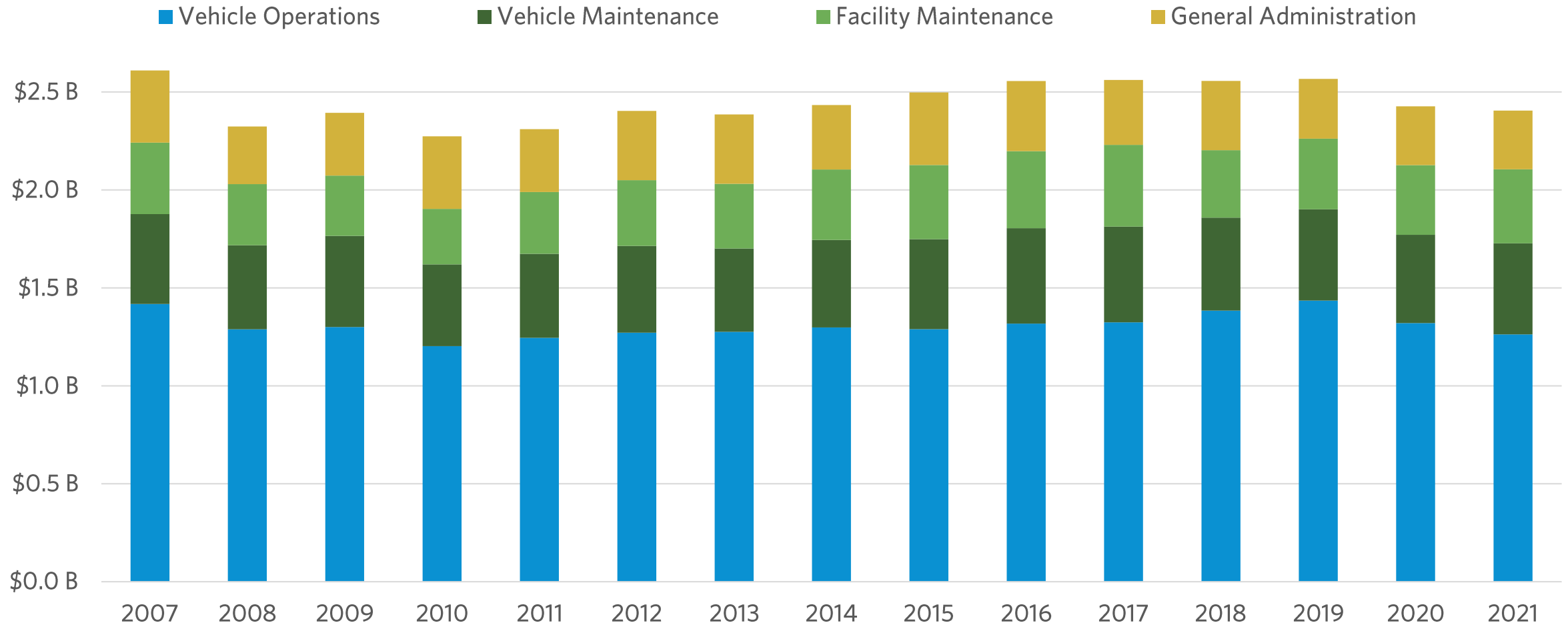
# Transit system operating expenses and revenues, 2023



Source: RTA 2023 Budget

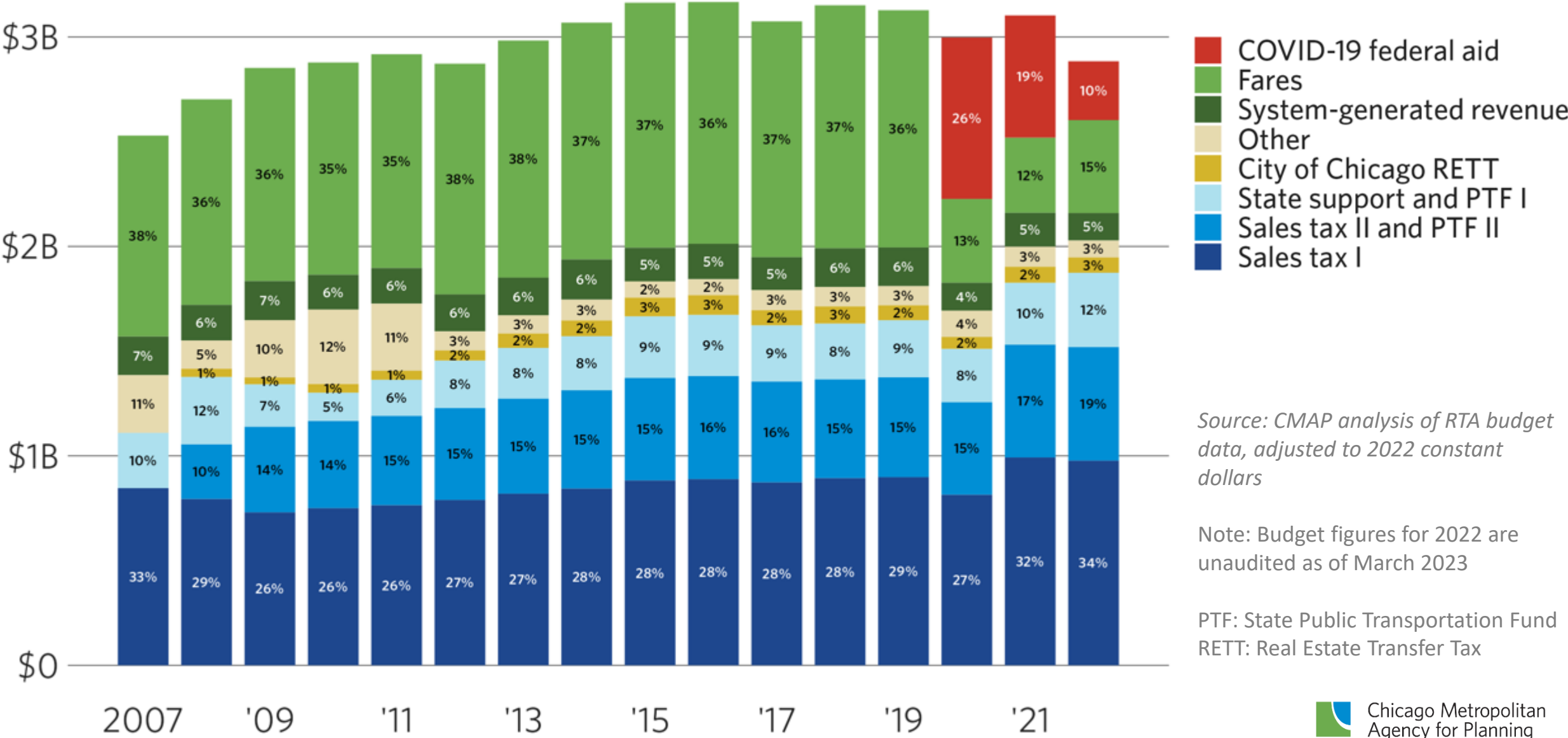
Note: RETT = Real Estate Transfer Tax; JSIF = Joint Self Insurance Fund

# Components of transit system operating expense



Source: CMAP analysis of National Transit Database, adjusted to 2021 constant dollars

# Components of transit system operating revenue



# The sales tax base in Illinois is focused on goods

Sales taxes in Illinois generally are collected on the sale of goods rather than services

Goods like groceries and prescription drugs are taxed at a lower rate

The RTA sales tax base is identical to the State retailers' occupation tax ("ROT") base, except the RTA sales tax also applies to the sale of qualifying food and drugs.

In 2022, **80% of all RTA sales tax generated was from sales on general merchandise, 20% on sales of qualifying food and drugs.**

## RTA SALES TAX BASE



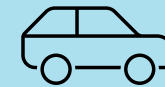
GENERAL  
MERCHANDISE



ADULT USE  
CANNABIS



QUALIFYING FOOD &  
DRUGS



VEHICLES



AVIATION FUEL

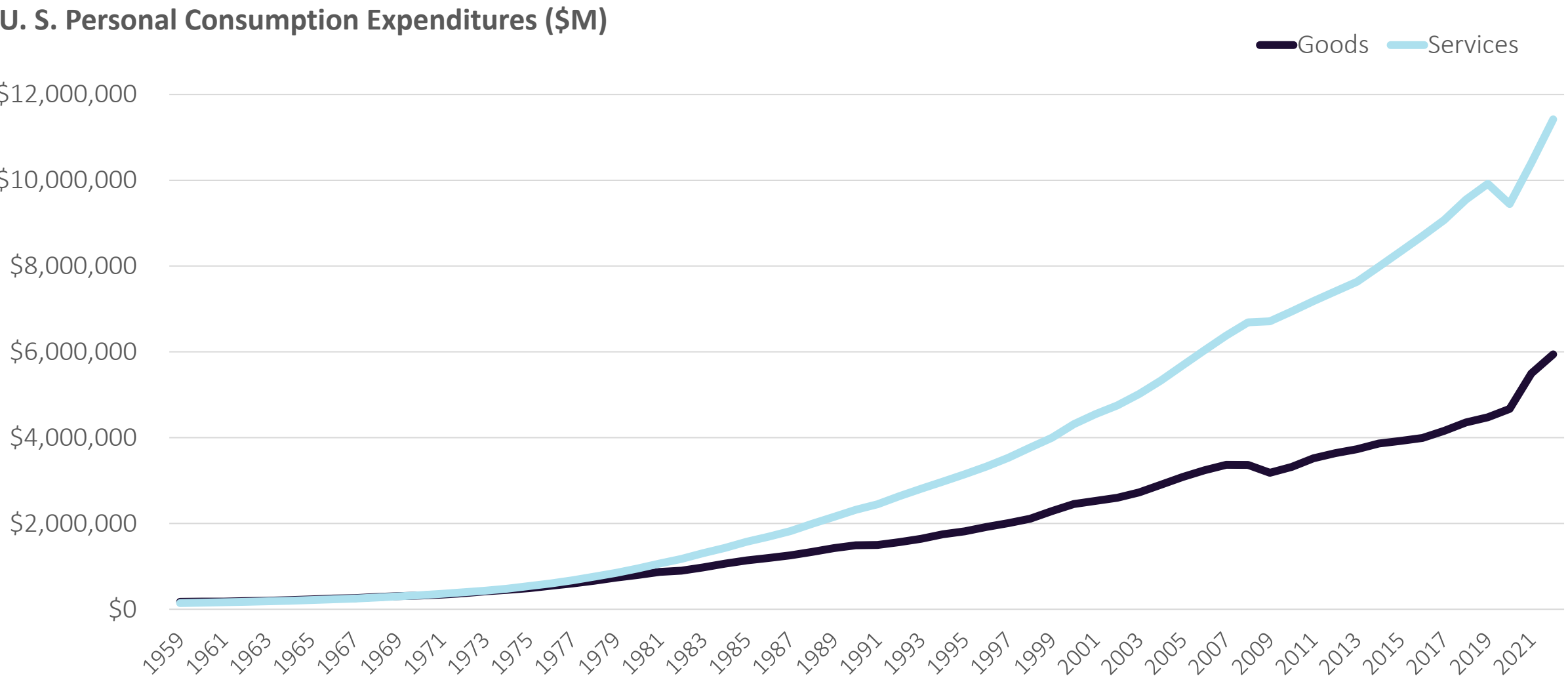


MEDICAL  
CANNABIS

GENERAL  
MERCHANDISE

QUALIFYING FOOD  
AND DRUGS

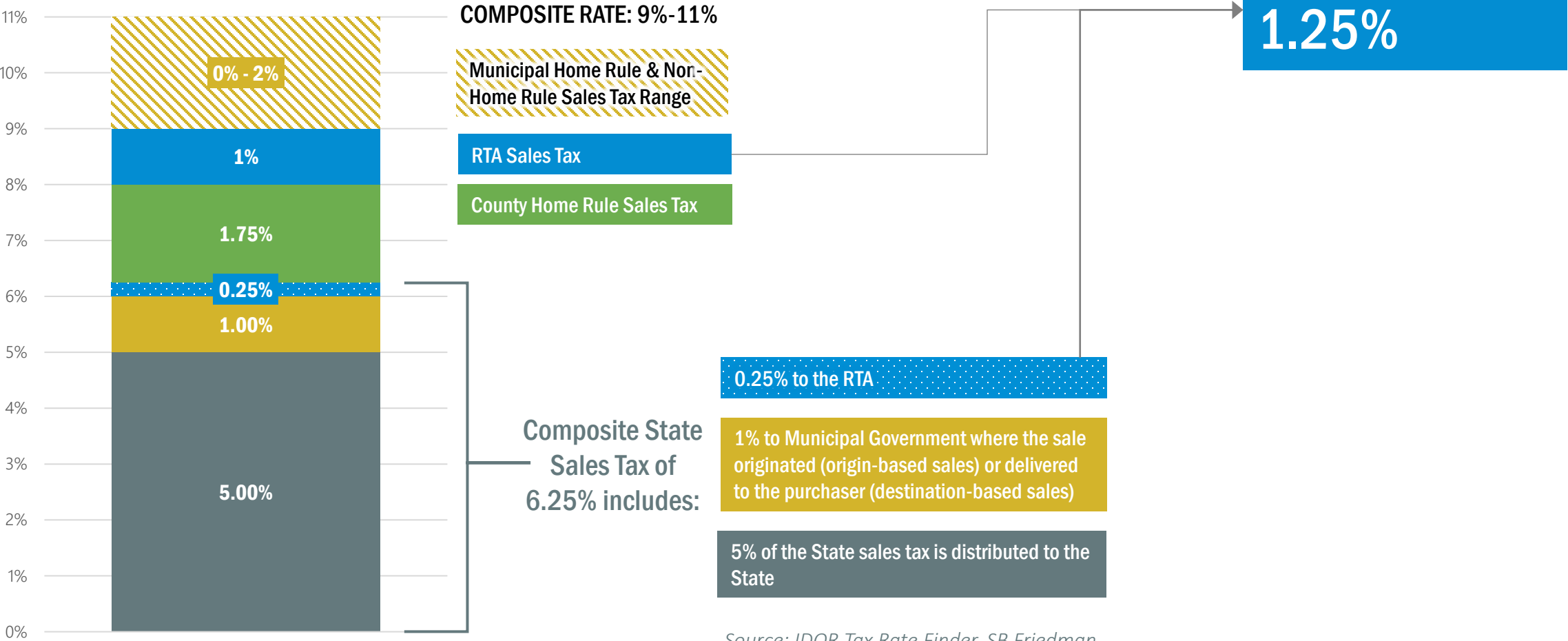
# Goods are shrinking as a share of economic activity



Source: CMAP Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Economic Research data

# RTA sales tax rate in Cook County

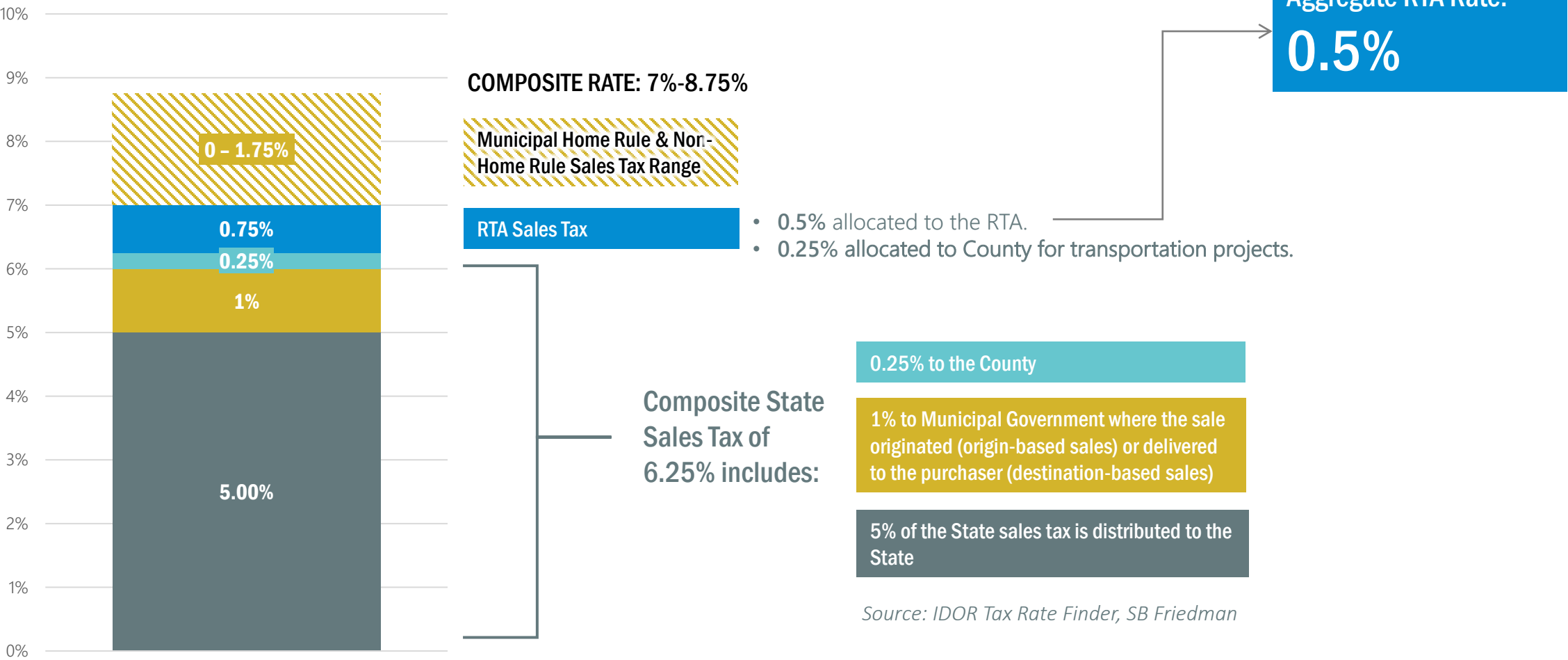
## COMPOSITE SALES TAXES ON GENERAL MERCHANDISE IN COOK COUNTY





# RTA sales tax rate in the collar counties

## COMPOSITE SALES TAXES ON GENERAL MERCHANDISE IN COLLAR COUNTIES



# Options for adjustments to the sales tax

Expand what is taxed statewide to include more services and capture emerging sectors

Increase the RTA sales tax rate

Reallocate 0.25% of existing RTA sales tax currently set aside for transportation funding in Collar counties

Collect RTA sales tax on goods and services taxed locally (e.g., parking tax, Chicago Boat Mooring Tax)

# Discussion

What is your reaction to these options?

Would changes be better made in the region alone or statewide?

What additional information would be needed to build the case for modifying the sales tax in Illinois?





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# How to implement it



# Interview takeaways

1. Positive aspects
2. Issues and concerns
3. Benefits of more coordination
4. RTA powers and constraints
5. Recommendations and challenges
6. Strategies to gain support



*Interviewees include transit providers, Board & MPO members, agencies, steering committee members, civic, business, and transit stakeholders.*

# Positive aspects

*Interview  
takeaways*

- "Fortunate to have what others are spending billions to create"
- Nuanced regional governance structure
- Agency leaders get along better than ever
- Can build on RTA's strategic plan, "Transit is the Answer"



# Issues and concerns

*Interview  
takeaways*

- Safety
- Conditions of stations and trains
- Funding
- Coordination

# Benefits of more coordination

*Interview  
takeaways*

- Customer information
- Fare integration
- Real-time coordination
- Capital and service planning

# RTA's powers and constraints

*Interview  
takeaways*

## RTA

- Insufficiently empowered and doesn't use all authority
- Risk adverse
- Constrained by allocations and super majority
  - Protects interests, but...
    - Mayor has effective veto powers
    - Together, members from Cook and collar counties can veto

# Recommendations and challenges

*Interview  
takeaways*

## Recommendations

- Tolling
- Reform governance structure
- State could have a greater role

## Challenges

- Getting the General Assembly's attention
- Interests of Chicago and suburbs
- Highway interests
- Agency support

# Strategies to gain support

*Interview  
takeaways*

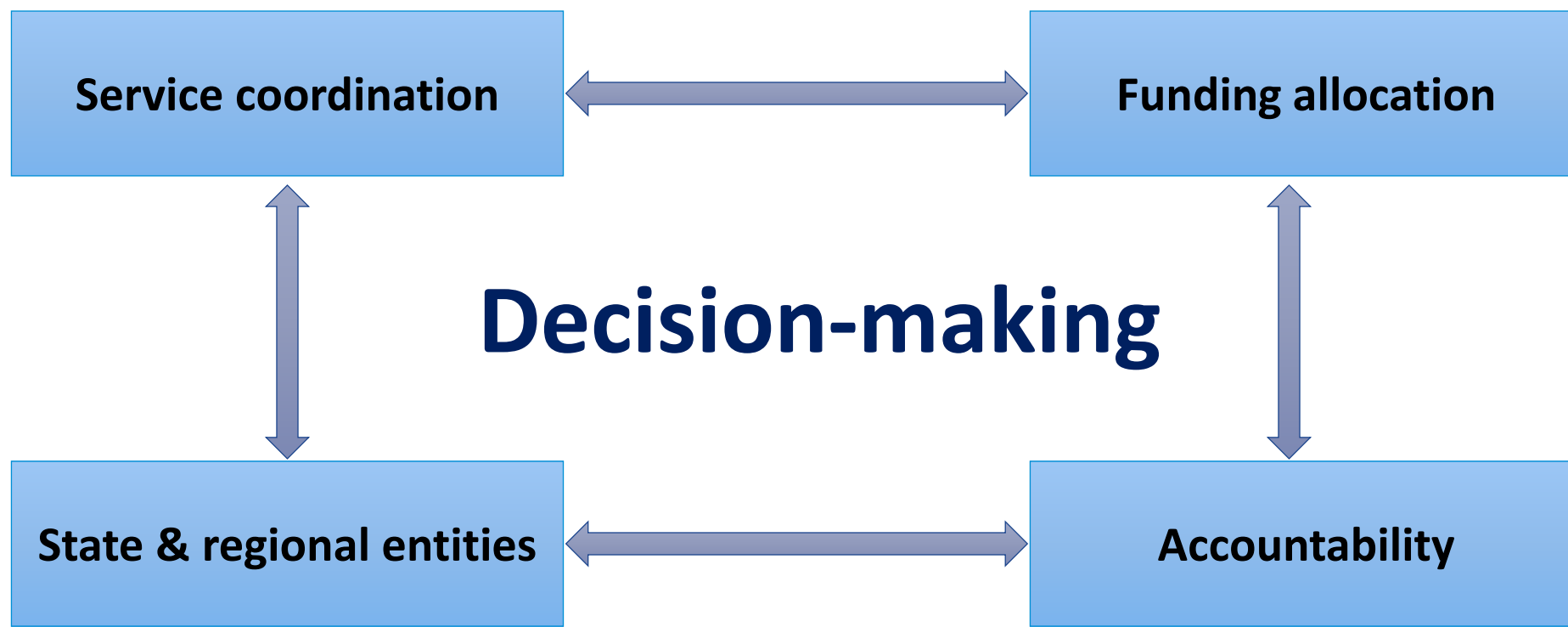
- Education/lobbying campaign
  - Cost of inaction
  - Everyone has to win
  - Transit champions
  - Quick fixes
  - "Metra is the key"
- Other benefits (equity, climate, etc.)

# Problem statement themes

## Connecting problem: decision-making

- Service coordination
- Funding allocation
- Accountability
- Role of state and regional entities

# Under the current governance model, these problems reinforce each other.



# Criteria

DRAFT

**Desired governance reform**  
*(Will the recommendation help address the stated problem?)*

## Decision-making

Service coordination

Funding allocation

Accountability

State & regional role

**Policy considerations**  
*(Does the recommendation support the state mandate for PART?)*

Financial sustainability

Equity

Mobility

**Process considerations**  
*(What is the path to implementation?)*

Administrative feasibility

Political feasibility

Timing

State span of control



# Discussion

What resonates with you from these themes?

Are there other issues not captured here?





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# Next Steps

May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting: In Person

- Deliver white papers
- Hold focus groups
- RTA/service board presentations & coordination



# Public Comment

Limited to two minute per individual,  
unless the Chair designates a longer  
or shorter time period





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# Thank you!

Visit **[cmap.is/PART](https://cmap.is/PART)** for information and resources.  
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**[@cmapillinois](#)** |    